

First National Bank
503-07 King Street
Alexandria
Virginia

HABS No. VA-672

HABS
VA
7-ALEX
147-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

FIRST NATIONAL BANK

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Location: 503-07 King Street, Alexandria, Virginia

Present Owner: Demolished in 1968 by the Alexandria Redevelopment Housing Authority as part of an urban renewal project in the old commercial center of Alexandria.

Statement of Significance: An early twentieth century bank building of the classical-revival style, the structure housed a conservative banking institution.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: Work was commenced in 1908 and completed in 1909.

The following item appeared in the Alexandria Gazette:

March 5, 1908: ANOTHER NEW BANK BUILDING

Messrs. M. B. Harlow & Co. Inc. have negotiated the sale, for the owners, of property Nos. 507, 509, 511 and 513 on the north side of King Street between Pitt and St. Asaph Streets, to the First National Bank. It is understood immediate steps will be taken toward the erection of a handsome and substantial bank building on the site secured. This institution occupies a foremost position among the strong conservative banks of this State, and the convenient location of the new site is sure to be appreciated by its many patrons.

2. Architect: The Washington firm of Vogt and Morrill.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The original owner was the First National Bank; in 1968, the owner was the First and Citizens National Bank.
4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: The Washington firm of Charles J. Cassidy Co.
5. Original plan and construction: The following items appearing in the Alexandria Gazette, 1908-1909, trace the construction of this building:

April 15, 1908:

At the meeting of the directors of the First National Bank today, plans and drawings of Messrs. Vogt and Morrill, architects, of Washington, for the new bank building, were chosen over the other competitors. The building is to be erected on the north side of King Street between Pitt and St. Asaph. It is to be a one story building for banking purposes only and will have a frontage of about forty feet with a depth of about 70. The front is to be of white marble and the building is to be equipped with every modern convenience. When completed it will be an ornament to the city. The specifications have not yet been drawn, but when they are they will be submitted to builders and it is proposed to have the building completed before the end of the year.

Mr. Milton Dana Morrill of the firm of architects whose plans were accepted is now a resident of this city, and his many friends will be pleased to hear of his success.

April 29, 1908: NEW HOME OF THE FIRST NATIONAL BANK

Plans and specifications are nearing completion for the new home of the First National Bank, which will be located on King street, between Pitt and St. Asaph. The building will occupy two lots with a frontage of about fifty feet. As will be seen from the above cut, the building is of classic design, and with its front of white Georgian marble will be a great addition to the city. It will be of fireproof construction throughout, and will contain many features new in bank building planning. One special new feature is the arrangement of the watchman's room directly over the vault, from which it will be possible to guard the entire premises without being observed. The building will be about fifty feet high, with a depth of seventy-five feet. Upon entering, the president's room will be on the left side, while the ladies (sic) room will be on the right, having wickets to tellers and clerks. Marble and bronze will be used largely for the interior, while the vaults for safe deposits and bank securities will be of the most modern type. The lobby will be in the central portion of the building and the entire interior of the banking room will be finished with white face brick, the ceiling being constructed of guestavino tile vaulting, which at the same time forms the interior decoration and the construction for the roof above. It is intended to have

the construction of the building begun about the last of May or the first of June. For the selection of plans a competition was held among the leading architects of Washington, and the design of Morrill and Vogt was accepted. The work will be under the personal supervision of Mr. Milton Dana Morrill, who has for a number of years been a resident of this city.

The First National Bank of Alexandria is one of the strongest banking institutions in this State. It has been in existence for forty-four years, having been organized in 1864. Mr. Charles R. Hooff, the president, was the first cashier, and continued in that position until a few years ago when he was elected to the presidency. The other officers are: J. F. Muir, Vice-President; G. E. Warfield, Cashier; J. J. Green, Assistant Cashier; and C. R. Hooff, J. F. Muir, M. B. Harlow, G. L. Boothe, and B. Baer, jr., directors. The resources of the bank amount to \$1,115,720.

May 13, 1908: WORK BEGUN

The work of tearing down the frame buildings on the north side of King Street between Pitt and St. Asaph was begun today and on that site will be erected the handsome marble front building for the First National Bank, a description of which has heretofore been published in the Gazette.

June 6, 1908: THE NEW BANK BUILDING

The contract for the new home of the First National Bank was today awarded to the firm of Charles J. Cassidy Co. of Washington. There were six bidders. ... The work of the construction of the building, which will be under the direction of the architect, Mr. M. D. Morrill, will be commenced in a few days. ... Bids for the vault work, which has been designed by the architects, Messrs. Vogt and Morrill, are to be opened on June 15, and work will be commenced immediately, so that the construction can be incorporated as the building rises. The exterior of the building will be fine Pennsylvania white marble. The contract will call for the building to be completed before December 30th.

The amounts of the bids were not given out, but it is understood that they ranged from \$37,500 to \$65,000. Mr. J. F. Rodgers of this city was the second lowest bidder.

October 26, 1908:

Work on the new building for the First National Bank on the north side of King Street, near Pitt, is now in an advanced stage. An additional force of brick layers was put to work today. A slight interruption was occasioned last week by some stonemasons who quit work at the instance of a walking delegate from Washington. Their places were filled by other men.

June 19, 1909:

An advertisement of the First National Bank (with a photograph of the building) announces that "the bank will occupy its new Building on King Street, between Pitt and St. Asaph streets, on Monday, June 21st, 1909. A cordial invitation is extended to the public to visit the bank."

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

The main banking area is prefaced with an ornate classical facade. A later three-story office addition adjoining to the east is announced by a severely utilitarian facade.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: One story, measuring c. 50 feet x 75 feet, according to newspaper accounts.
2. Wall construction, finish and color: Brick and concrete faced with "white Georgian marble." The entire entrance facade is expressed as a broken-bed Doric pediment supported by abbreviated Doric pilasters with entrance and large arched window in the center. The broken entablature provides for an arched opening and ornamental keystone.
3. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: A heavily paneled door is situated at the center of the public entrance, surrounded by a Greek fret pattern.
 - b. Windows and shutters: A great central grilled window suggestive of an arch or niche rises above the entrance and is ornamented with metal mullions. The entrance is flanked by solid masonry piers supporting the Doric pediment.
4. Roof: Gable

C. Description of Interior:

The public lobby is composed of one large room topped by a single-arched vault punctuated by skylights. The banking room is lined with white brick. The arched window of the facade is echoed by a similar window in the rear of the building above the bank vault. The room is sectioned off by marble partitions. Offices extend in two stories from the back of the main banking room. In a photograph of a room in the office addition adjoining the main bank building to the east, paneled wainscoting, built-in cabinets, a marble-faced, tudor-arched fireplace, and a heavy cornice are the principal decorative features.

D. Site:

The building faces south on King Street.

Prepared by Mrs. Hugh B. Cox of
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Edited by
Antoinette J. Lee
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PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken in 1968 to document the commercial and residential buildings of downtown Alexandria which were to be demolished in an urban renewal project. The project was cosponsored by the Historic Alexandria Foundation and the Historic American Buildings Survey. Mrs. Hugh B. Cox was the historian and George Eisenman supplied the photographs. The material was edited and updated in 1975 by Antoinette J. Lee, working on contract for HABS.